

Adobe Photoshop CS

# Image correction made easy with the Levels command

Does your photo look dull, lacking contrast? Or, does it have a color cast? Is it reddish or greenish? Using the Levels command in Adobe® Photoshop® CS you can correct the tonal range and color balance of an image by adjusting intensity levels of the image's shadows, midtones, and highlights.



## 1. Open an Image in Photoshop.

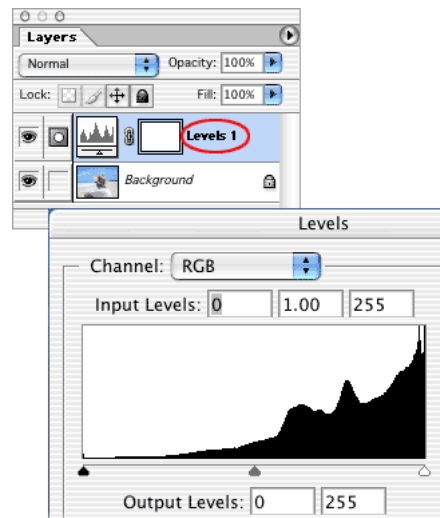
Choose File > Open or double-click a thumbnail in the File Browser. Before you start making adjustments, evaluate the image tonality. Is it too light or dark? Does it have too much or too little contrast? Is there a color cast?



## 2. Create a new Levels adjustment layer.

Choose Layer > New Adjustment Layer > Levels, and then click OK in the New Layer dialog box. You can also open the Levels command by choosing Image > Adjustments > Levels. However, with an adjustment layer, you are applying the tonal correction on a separate layer. The original image is untouched. If you decide you don't like your changes, you can change them at any time or simply discard the adjustment layer and return to your original image.

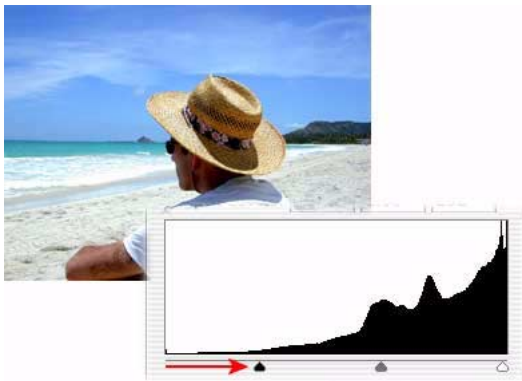
A useful tool for evaluating an image's tonality is the histogram displayed in the Levels dialog box. A histogram illustrates how pixels in an image are distributed by graphing the number of pixels at each color intensity level. This can show you whether the image contains enough detail in the shadows (shown in the left part of the histogram), midtones (shown in the middle), and highlights (shown in the right part) to create good overall contrast in the image.



### 3. Set the shadows and highlights.

Move the Black Point Input slider and the White Point Input slider (located directly beneath the histogram) inward from the edges of the histogram. Moving the Black Point Input slider maps all image values at its position or below to the Output Levels black point (set by default to 0, or pure black). Moving the White Point Input slider maps image values at its position or above to the Output Levels white point (set by default to 255, or pure white).

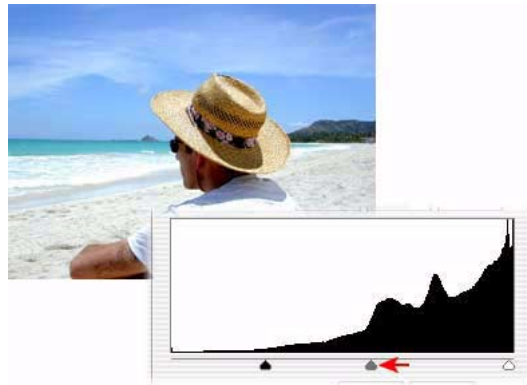
For example, if your image is too dark, try moving the Input White Point slider to the left. This maps more values in the image to 255 (the Output Levels white point), making them lighter.



### 4. Adjust the midtones.

Move the middle Input slider to the left to lighten the image or to the right to darken the image.

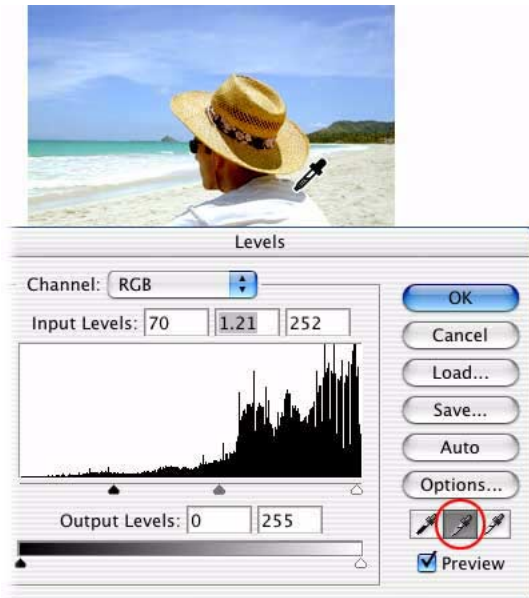
The middle Input slider adjusts the gamma in the image. It moves the midtone (level 128) and changes the intensity values of the middle range of gray tones without dramatically altering the highlights and shadows.



### 5. Remove the color cast.

Select the Set Gray Point Eyedropper tool in the Levels dialog box. Click an area in the image that contains only a gray tone, or an area containing as few colors as possible. It's easier to color balance an image by first identifying an area that should be neutral and then removing the color cast from that area. With such a correction, all other colors in the image should be color balanced, too. The eyedropper tools work best on an image with easily identified neutrals.

Advanced users often use the Levels command to adjust individual channels and remove a color cast. Choose a channel from the Channel menu of the Levels dialog box and then adjust the Input sliders.



## 6. Apply the Levels adjustment.

Click OK.